

FAQ 12: How can I recruit particular subgroups of children?

What's the issue?

Sometimes researchers want to study a specific population or particular subgroups of children, which may not be easy to recognize or reach through the usual ways of recruiting. This may be the case for quantitative, and even more so for qualitative, research, which is often used when there is little known about the phenomena under study.

Common practice

Internet discussion forums or mailing lists on a vast amount of topics that are available nowadays can provide a useful way of recruiting particular subgroups of older children and teenagers. Researchers could go to a specific high school forum to recruit teenagers for a study about their use of media in everyday life.

If researchers want various subgroups (e.g. age subgroups or gender subgroups of children) in the sample, they could use stratified random sampling, which combines stratified sampling with random sampling. For example, if researchers wanted a stratified random sample of boys and girls from the last year of primary school, they would first separate the entire population of the last year primary school pupils into two groups, one all boys and the other all girls. To complete the sampling they would then independently select a random sample from each stratum (a random sample of boys and another of girls).

Questions to consider

Particular subgroups that deserve special attention in research on the use of ICT are socially vulnerable and underprivileged children. Recruiting young children from this background requires more effort to gain the confidence of the parents who are often not acquainted with or even suspicious of the formal and asymmetrical relationship between the (academic) researcher and themselves. Doing research with teenagers with a socially less privileged background urges researchers to be reflective about their own social position, their idiom and their attitude, and how this all affects the research process.

Researchers' experiences

In the first attempt to conduct a questionnaire on mobile phone use by young teenagers in Greece, I thought of using the Greek School Network (GSN) (ideally, this would have meant that the design still need another few

and clubs we visited to recruit teenagers were predominantly 'white', so we had to look for other settings